

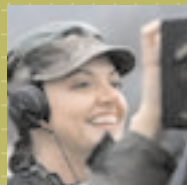
OVERVIEW REPORT

November 2004

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Influencer Poll Report



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INFLUENCER POLL WAVE 3 – NOVEMBER 2004

OVERVIEW REPORT

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Executive Summary

The Department of Defense (DoD) conducts Influencer Polls on a regular basis to measure influencers' perceptions of the Military and their likelihood to recommend military service to youth. This report details the findings of the November 2004 Influencer Poll 3.

The primary focus of these polls is to learn about the military attitudes of adults who have relationships with youth ages 12-21. These influencers' recommendations regarding military service significantly affect potential recruits' decision whether or not to enlist. To this end, the November 2004 Influencer Poll measured influencers':

- Favorability toward and knowledge of the Military.
- Attitudes toward the Military.
- Sources of impressions about the Military.
- Perceptions of military recruiters.
- Receptiveness to different types of recruitment communications.

Drop in Likelihood to Recommend

Overall, influencers' likelihood to recommend the Military and its individual branches decreased since last measured in May 2004 for both parents and non-parents. Further, parents were less likely to recommend the Military to their children than non-parents were to a youth they know. Demographic differences included higher likelihood to recommend among men than among women, and higher likelihood to recommend among those in households earning \$25,000 to \$40,000 than those in either higher or lower income households.

Negative Impact of Current Events

The majority of influencers report that the U.S. War on Terrorism has negatively affected their likelihood to recommend the Military. In particular, Black influencers reported being more negatively affected than others. An overwhelming 81% of Blacks reported that the War on Terrorism had a negative effect on their likelihood to recommend. Blacks gave similar more negative responses on other current events questions.

Influencer Attitudes and Conversations with Youth

Influencers reported a positive view of the Military, but admitted that they were not particularly knowledgeable about it. Influencers' favorability toward the Military was lower in November 2004 than it was in May 2004. Self-reported knowledge about the Military remained moderate for both parents and non-parent influencers.

Conversations with Youth

The majority of influencers reported talking to youth about their future. However, less than half of influencers reported that the Military entered into these conversations. Those influencers who did discuss the Military with youth tended to report being positive about it, although parents were more likely to be negative than non-parent influencers. The significance of this finding is highlighted by results from the concurrently conducted Youth Poll, which indicate that youth who have spoken with an influencer about the Military are more propensed as well as more knowledgeable about and favorable toward the Military.

Executive Summary

(continued)

Military Recruiters

Overall, attitudes about recruiters are positive, but only moderately so. Parents' attitudes towards recruiters are worse than non-parent influencers' attitudes, overall. In general, agreement with negative statements about recruiters is fairly high.

Over half of influencers reported having spoken with a military recruiter sometime in the past. However, influencers who had spoken with a recruiter were more likely than those who had not to report that the information that military recruiters was not trustworthy, that military recruiters use high pressure tactics, and that people entering the Military often don't get the benefits they were promised.

Sources of Information about the Military

The sources of information that influencers are most likely to use when seeking information about the Military are also the sources that they report trusting the most. In order of likelihood to use them, these

sources are: (1) family and friends, (2) military Websites and the Internet, (3) educators, and (4) military recruiters. Both parent and non-parent influencers report that they would be fairly receptive to both phone calls from recruiters and mail sent by the Military.

Conclusions

These findings indicate that military recruiting may benefit from efforts to increase communication between adult influencers and youth regarding military service. Results from this effort also suggest that recruiter phone calls and mailings will increase influencer-youth communication. This would promote greater likelihood to join the military among youth, but more research is required to determine the true nature of communications spurred by such efforts. At the same time, trust in and perceptions of recruiters must also be monitored and improved.

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OVERVIEW REPORT

The primary goal of the Influencer Poll is to provide regular tracking of influencers' likelihood to recommend the Military to youth. Section One covers the approach and methodology used in the November 2004 Influencer Poll.



Section 1

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Background and Purpose

Although recruiting is rarely discussed in the popular press with the same urgency as military engagements, the U.S. Military could not successfully carry out any of its missions without successfully recruiting an all-volunteer force. Successfully manning an all-volunteer military is an enormously complex project influenced by a number of factors. One of the most important of these factors is public opinion about the military, and in particular, the opinion of those individuals who have access to and who influence recruit-aged youth.

Recent events have added to the challenge that the Department of Defense faces in maintaining an all-volunteer force. Factors such as military engagements, youth eligibility, propensity to join the military, and an improving U.S. economy have combined to increase the resources the armed services must allocate to recruiting new volunteers. This is illustrated by the fact that an Army recruiter must contact approximately 120 prospects to get a single recruit¹. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the attractiveness of military service has gradually declined in the minds of the American public. These difficulties have the potential to threaten the future quality of the U.S. Military.

Influencers play a major role in youth's decisions regarding college and occupational choice due to the impact they have on adolescents' educational goals, scholastic achievement, attitudes and values, and appraisal of their capabilities. Thus, the Influencer Polls were initiated to develop an understanding of the important influencers in youth's lives and how they affect youth decision-making. Influencers in this case are

defined as adults who have a direct, influential role on the decisions youth make about their post-high school options.

This study focused on two types of influencers: parents and non-parents. Parents have a close relationship with youth and personal knowledge of a youth's personality, character and emotional well-being. The nature of the relationship is intensely personal, with parental influencers tending to be direct and open with youth, and at times more protective of their well-being than the youth themselves. Parents influence fewer youth, but likely have a stronger effect on them than other influencers.

Non-parents include educators, relatives, clergy or others who may or may not have children of their own. They typically have some sort of formal authority over youth. For youth, they provide another source of support and frequently open doors to a wider range of opportunities, including some that parents may not. Non-parents affect youth on a wider scale than do parents. However, due to the great variety in the types of these influencers, the degree of influence varies greatly among them.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the findings from the November 2004 Influencer Poll in a way that helps identify factors that are likely to influence future recruiting effectiveness. Additionally, the information presented herein can be used to help guide advertising or outreach campaigns and ultimately assist the U.S. Military Services in meeting their accession requirements.

Approach

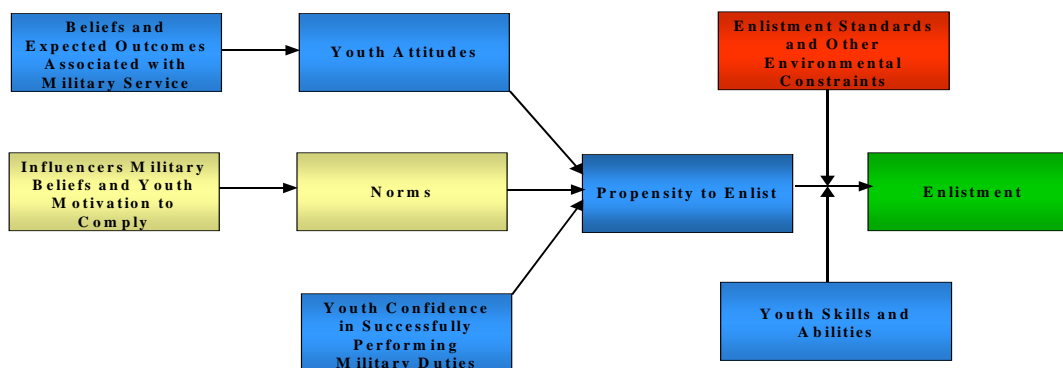
There are a large number of hypothesized causes for the military's recruiting difficulties over the past several years, as well as a similar set of hypotheses about potential issues with recruiting effectiveness in the future. However, for recruitment efforts to be successful, recruiting efforts must be based on only empirically supported hypotheses. Accurate information about youth and adult attitudes, adult recommendations to youth of post-high school options, and enlistment intentions are necessary to help direct the Department of Defense's efforts to maintain a quality all-volunteer military force. The goal of this Influencer Poll is to provide information related to these issues.

The figure on the bottom of this page displays a conceptual model of enlistment behavior. This model is based on Ajzen and Fishbein'sⁱⁱ *Theory of Reasoned Action*, a prominent theory in psychology used for understanding behavior. As the model indicates, the intention to perform a given behavior is viewed as a function of two primary factors: one's attitude toward performing the behavior and one's subjective norms concerning the behavior.

Attitudes are the result of one's beliefs that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes and a judgment of the importance of those outcomes. Subjective norms are the perception that other people, in this case influencers, think that one should or should not engage in the behavior in question.

On the right side of the model, an additional important determinant of military enlistment behavior is displayed. That is the ability of youth to meet the enlistment standards set by the U.S. Military. While force structure dictates the quantity of people needed to fill military units, the qualifications of those people in terms of the knowledge, aptitude, skill, physical fitness, medical health, and motivation determine the effectiveness of those units.

Military enlistment, like any other behavior, is most likely to occur when one has a strong intention to engage in a behavior, as well as the necessary skills and abilities (i.e., meets military enlistment standards). In addition, one needs to be free from environmental constraints that prevent the behavior.



Approach

(continued)

Use of a model-based approach provides several advantages. One advantage is that it allows users to come up with a strategic plan of action. For example, different interventions would be necessary if one has formed an intention but is unable to act, than if one has little or no intention to perform the behavior or if one is not engaging in the behavior because of social pressure being exerted from important others. A model-based approach that integrates these components aids decision-making by providing a more comprehensive and integrative platform of information from which to make decisions.

The model as applied to enlistment behavior can also be applied to influencers' likelihood to recommend military service. In this case, the behavior of interest is recommending military service; the intention is to perform this behavior, and so on. In line with this model, the Influencer Poll focused primarily on adult influencers' likelihood to recommend the military, their favorability toward the military, knowledge of the military and attitudes toward the war in Iraq and economic issues. Researches have found that where people get the information they use to make decisions has a great influence on their attitudes and perceptions of importance of outcomes. In addition, understanding where influencers typically get their impressions can aid the military in its own marketing and advertising efforts. Thus, this poll also examines where youth get their information and their perceived trust in this information.

One additional related topic was covered in this poll at the request of the Department of Defense: Influencers' attitudes toward

employment with the federal government as an option for young people.

Structure of this Report

The report is structured around the conceptual model on the previous page, but specifically addresses influencers' sources of impressions and likelihood to recommend the Military. Following this introduction, the report begins, in Section 2, with a definition of influencers, including a breakdown of two subcategories of influencers: parents and non-parents. Section 2 also examines the roles of influencers and how they affect the decision-making of youth. It details which post-high school options influencers are most likely to recommend, as well as the reasons behind those recommendations. Section 2 continues with coverage of how influencers feel about the U.S. Military, and their perception of military service as a post-high school option. It further delineates why influencers feel the way they do and outlines what other variables are related to likelihood to recommend military service. Section 3 describes where influencers get their impressions of the military, and which sources they are most likely to seek out and trust. Section 4 covers generally the same information as section two, but focuses in on each branch, describing the unique issues and relative positioning for each branch. Finally, Section 5 concludes by presenting the conclusions and recommendations based on analyses provided in each of the sections.

Naming Convention

Throughout this report, we refer to three race/ethnic groups: Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. These names correspond to the group names used by the Census Bureau.

Methodology

The November 2004 Influencer Poll was administered via Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews during October and November 2004. Participants included adults ages 22-85 who reported directly influencing youth ages 12-21. The total 1,560 adult influencers in the sample were split into two subcategories:

Parents

Six hundred seventy-five of interviews were conducted with parents of youth who completed the November 2004 Youth Poll.

Non-Parents

An additional 885 non-parent adult influencers (e.g., teachers, relatives, coaches) participated in the study. These participants were contacted using random

digit dialing procedures. American households were screened for the target audience. In the case that more than one person in the household met these criteria, the respondent with the most recent birthday prior to the interview date was selected.

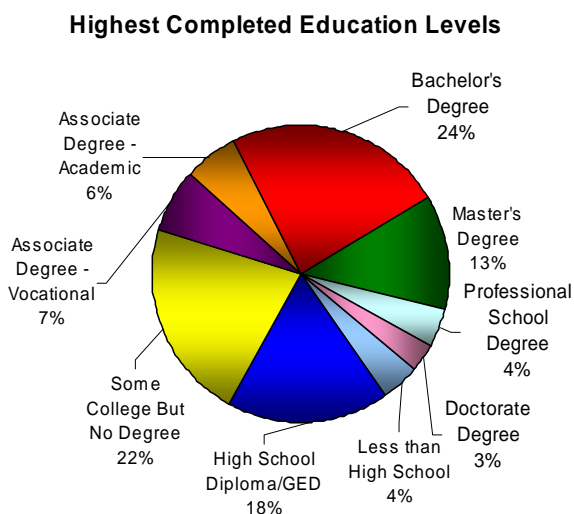
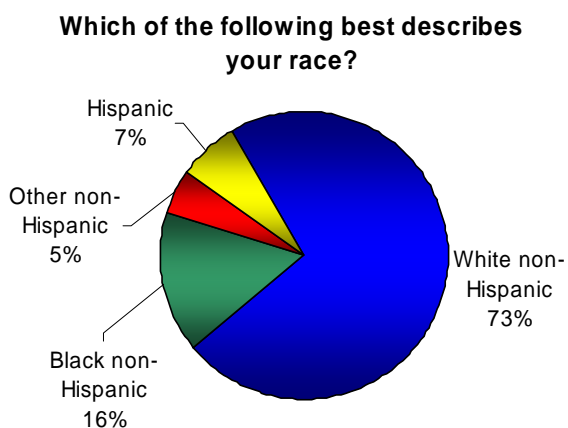
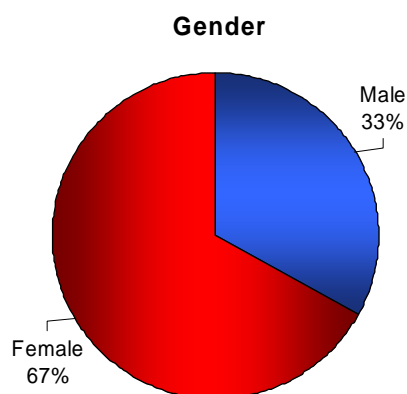
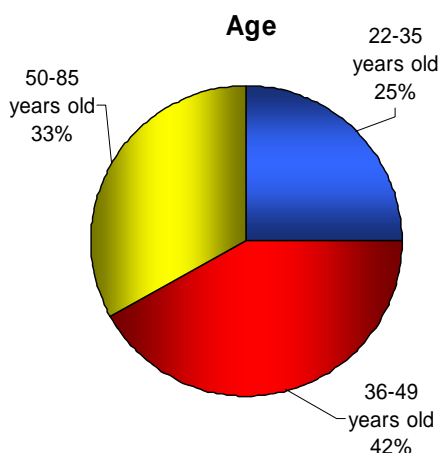
The survey took an average of 20 minutes to complete. As a rough guide, the overall margin of error at the 95% confidence interval for estimates based on the total sample is approximately:

- ± 2.5 percentage points for proportions;
- ± 0.12 for 10-point scales.

Respondent Profile

This survey was conducted via telephone. The following charts display the demographic characteristics of the 1,560 survey respondents:

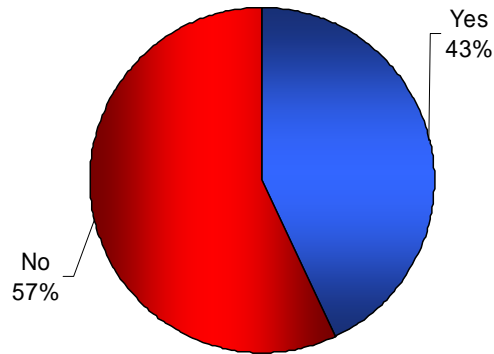
- Age
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Highest Completed Education Levels
- Have Children between 12 and 21
- Current Employment Status
- Type of Non-Parent Influencer
- Marital Status
- Current or Past Member of Armed Forces
- Annual Household Income



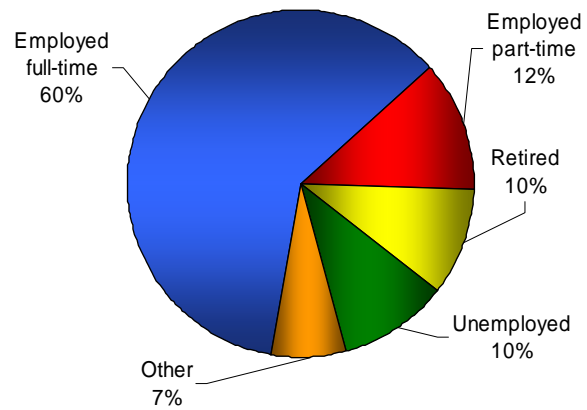
Respondent Profile

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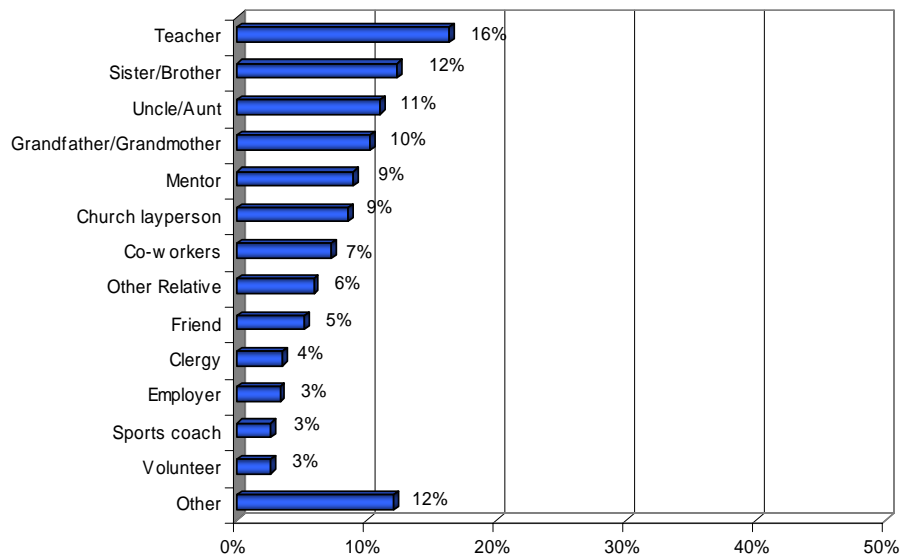
Do you have children between the ages of 12 and 21?



Current Employment Status



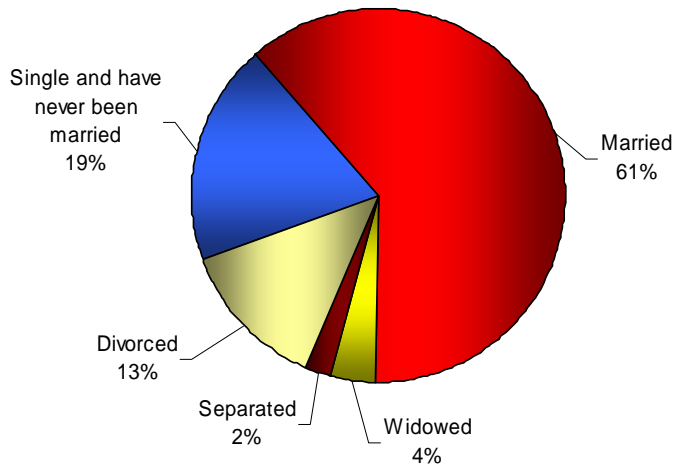
What role or position do you have where you interact with youth ages 12 to 21?



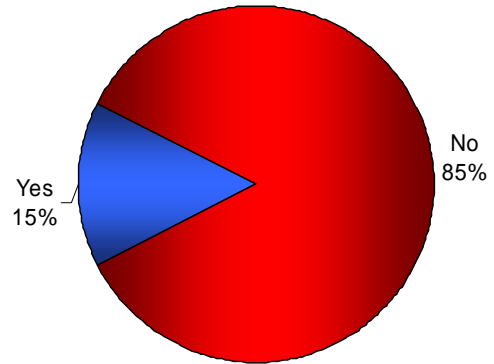
Respondent Profile

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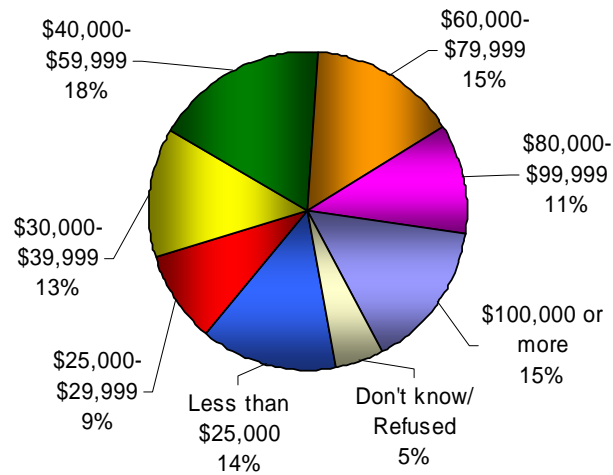
What is your marital status?



Are you or have you been a member of the armed forces?



Annual Household Income



ⁱ National Research Council (2003). *Attitudes, Aptitudes, and Aspirations of American Youth: Implications for Military Recruitment*. Committee on the Youth Population and Military Recruitment. Paul Sackett and Anne Mavor, editors. Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press.

ⁱⁱ Ajzen, I., and Fishbein, M. (1980). *Understanding, attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

OVERVIEW REPORT

Section Two provides a definition of influencers and discusses the role that they play in youths' lives. It also discusses influencers' general views about the post high school options available to youth.



Section 2

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Influencers: Who They Are and Their Role

As discussed in Section 1, this section will begin with a definition of influencers, including a breakdown of two subcategories of influencers: parents and non-parents. Additionally, this section will examine the roles of influencers and how they affect the decision-making of youth. Also, there will be coverage of some environmental factors that affect the recommendations of influencers.

Who Influencers Are

Influencers are an important group to understand for those interested in youth's decisions. Young people's beliefs, values, and attitudes are forged and can be altered through their interaction with others. For this reason, influencers are an important factor in any decision youth make. In this section, we seek to identify the influencers of potential recruits and the role they play in a youth's career decisions.

Influencers, as defined in this study, were adults ages 22-85 who reported directly influencing youth ages 12-21. These influencers ranged from coaches and clergy to mothers and guidance counselors. The 1,560 adult influencers in the sample were split into two subcategories:

Parent Influencers

In this report, the term parent is reserved for those who have children ages 16-21. These influencers have a close relationship with youth, having personal knowledge of a youth's personality, character, and emotional well-being. These influencers tend to be direct and open with youth, and at times more protective of youth and their well-being than non-parent influencers. In terms of access, parents influence fewer youth than other influencers, such as guidance counselors, but are more likely to have a stronger effect on them.

Non-Parents

Educators, relatives, and others, can also be influencers. Non-parent influencers, as defined in this report, may or may not have children outside the specified age range (16-21). However, as observed in this poll, non-parents typically have some sort of formal authority over youth. They provide another source of support to youth and frequently open doors to a wider range of opportunities, including some that parents may not. Non-parents affect youth in larger numbers (one-to-many) than do parents, but usually do not have as strong an impact. However, due to the variety of roles these influencers play, the degree of influence varies greatly from one non-parent influencer to the next.

Influencers: Who They Are and Their Role

(continued)

Role of the Influencer

Influencers (parents and non-parents) play a major role in youth decisions-making due to the impact they have on adolescents' educational goals, scholastic achievement, and appraisal of their ability. In related research, adult influencers have been found to directly influence the norms and attitudes that youth holdⁱ. Research has also demonstrated that there are numerous family variables (i.e. socioeconomic status, parental education, etc.) that influence the career choices of young adultsⁱⁱ. It appears that family interactions therefore play an important role in young people's formation of aspirations and decisions about careers.

Conversations with Youth

The November 2004 Influencer Poll found that a great majority (91%) of influencers reported that they had spoken to youth regarding their future plans in the past 12 months. This finding is consistent with the 90% reported in the November 2004 Youth Poll. Parents (96%) were more likely to report having spoken with youth about the future than non-parents (86%). In addition, of those influencers who had reported having a conversation with a youth about the future, parents (71%) were more likely to report having initiated the conversation than non-parents (57%).

The Influencer Poll also asked if joining the military was part of this conversation about the future. Results show that parents (44%) were just as likely as non-parents (43%) to report that the conversation involved a discussion of the military.

In an effort to better understand these conversations, the Influencer Poll asked

whether or not the conversations with youth, regarding the Military were positive, negative, or neutral. Surprisingly, 65% of non-parents and 44% of parents say they were mostly or completely positive during the conversation. In fact, only 7% of non-parents and 25% of parents say they were mostly or completely negative. This reaffirms that it is not only necessary, but beneficial, to drive conversations about the military between influencers and youth.

Overall, these results replicate the findings of the November 2004 Youth Poll in concluding that few youth talk to influencers about the Military as an option for their future. Moreover, when these conversations do occur, parents are much more likely to be negative toward the Military than non-parents. The importance of this type of communication is important, as indicated by Griepentrog (2005)ⁱⁱⁱ analyses, which found that youth who had discussed joining the Military with an influencer were more propensed to join the Military.

The May 2004 Influencer Poll 2 revealed that among parents, mothers were more likely than fathers, and younger parents more likely than older parents, to report discussing the future more frequently. The August 2001 Youth Poll revealed that these conversations have a significant impact, as about 60% of youth report that they make decisions about their career jointly with their parents, and that their parents are either extremely or very involved in career-preparation decisions. Black parents especially have been shown to be a major influence on the career choices of Black youth (Leong, 1995).

Influencers: Who They Are and Their Role

(continued)

Degree of Influence

Poll results indicate that parents are the most significant influencers of youth. In the May 2004 Youth Poll, youth rated their mothers as having the strongest influence, with their fathers a close second.

Research demonstrates that influencers' comments, beliefs, and interactions with youth may have a profound influence on their vocational development. Data from previous Youth Polls reveal that youth seek career advice and approval most often from their parents, confirming these findings from the parental point of view.

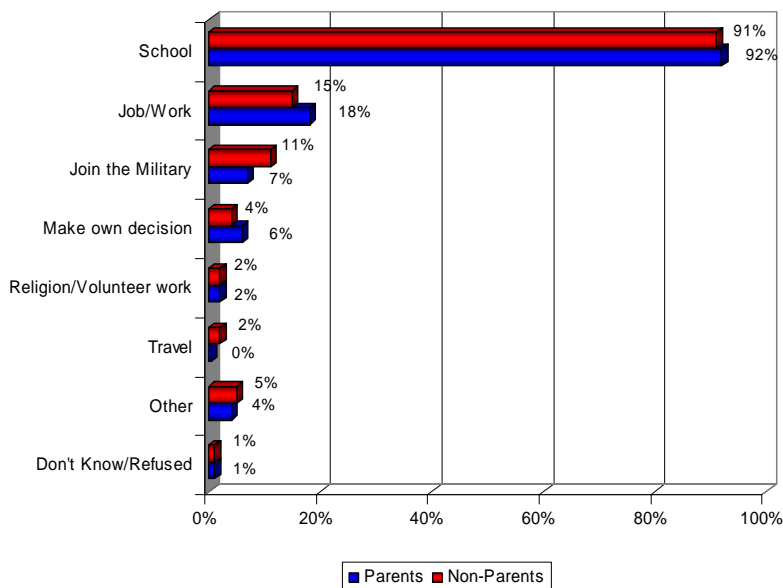
Although other types of influencers do not have as strong an impact on youth decisions, they are still important because they tend to influence a greater *number* of youth, and some play a role in young people's ability to carry out their plans. In a recent study by the Department of Defense, over 90% of guidance counselors and half of teachers reported they had on several or many occasions "played a critical role in helping a student achieve his/her career goals^{iv}."

Influencers' Perspectives on Post High School Options

Currently, influencers predominantly promote and recommend that youth go to college. When asked what they would

they were to recommend each of a list of specific options.

Suppose a youth you know came to you for advice about post-high school options. What would you recommend?



recommend to a youth, their student or their child, 91% of non-parents and 92% of parents said they would recommend more schooling. To get a better sense of how influencers feel about the various options available to youth, the November 2004 Influencer Poll also asked them how likely

Race/Ethnic Differences

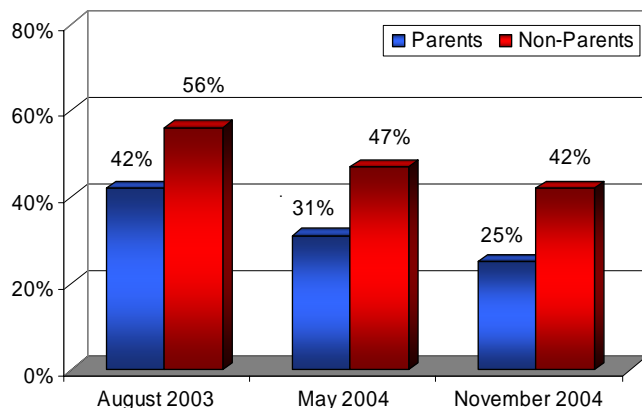
- Hispanic influencers were more likely to recommend the military than non-Hispanic influencers

Gender Differences

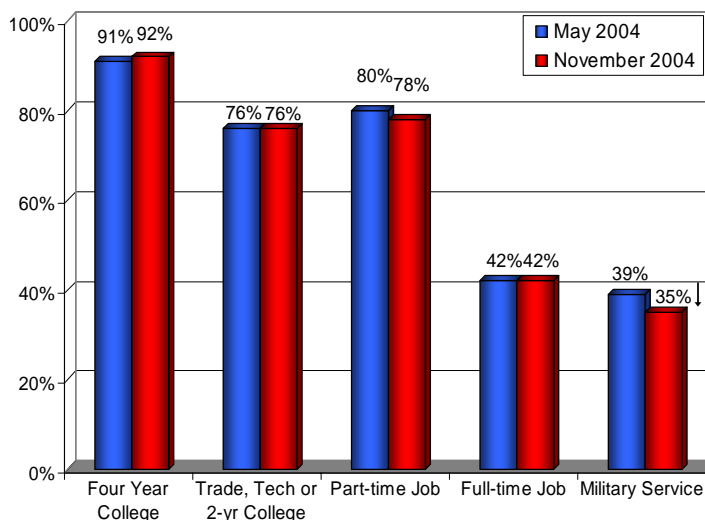
- Female influencers were more likely to recommend a trade, technical, or community college.

Attending a four-year college or university was again the most recommended option, but other options also received consideration. The numbers were similar to those found in the May 2004 Influencer Poll, with the only significant changes being a decrease in influencers' likelihood of recommending the military, which dropped from 39% to 35%.

Likelihood you would recommend military service
(% Likely and Very Likely)



Suppose a youth you know came to you for advice about post-high school options. Likelihood you would recommend
(% likely or very likely):

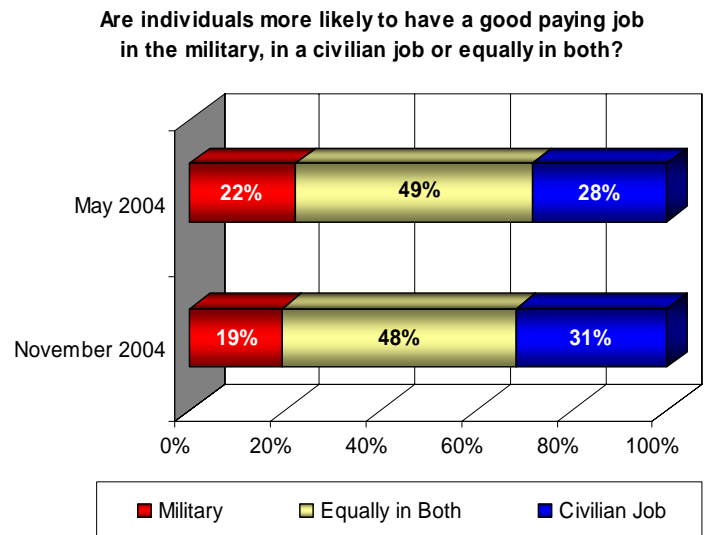


The Economy

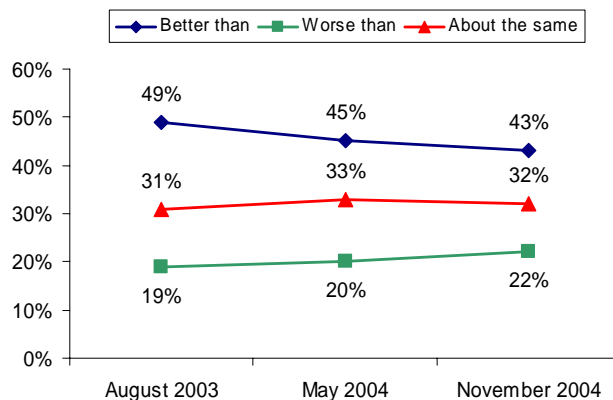
A number of environmental factors help shape influencers' impressions of what is or will be the best option for a youth. Post-high school options appear more or less attractive to influencers depending on the perceived strength of the economy and labor market. It is important, therefore, to understand how influencers view the economy today and what their expectations are for the future.

The November 2004 Influencer Poll asked influencers two specific questions regarding the economy. The first asked how difficult it is for a high school graduate to get a full-time job in their community. The second asked influencers how they thought the economy would be doing in four years. A comparison with the findings from the May 2004 Influencer Poll indicates that there has not been a significant change since the last Influencer Poll on either of these two questions. Only 29% of influencers think it is difficult or impossible for a high school graduate to get a job in their community, and 43% think that the economy will be better in four years. Interestingly, parents are less likely than non-parents to think the economy will improve in four years.

Both of these factors contribute to the fact that 19% of influencers think that people are more likely to have a good-paying job in the Military than in a civilian job, 48% think people are equally likely to find a good paying job in either, and 31% think people are more likely to find a good-paying job in a civilian job.



Four years from now, do you think the economy will be better than, worse than, or about the same as it is today?

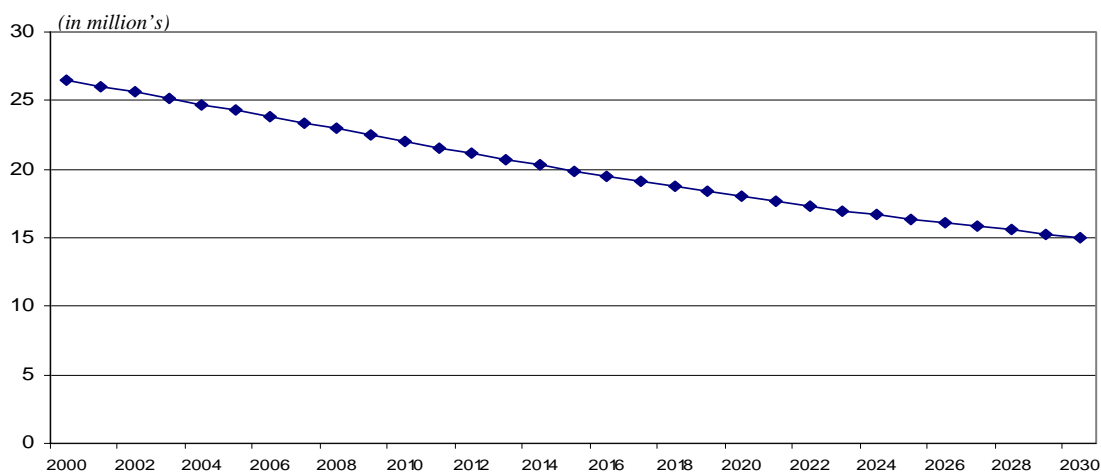


Veteran Population

One important characteristic of the influencer population is experience with the military. Presumably, the less military experience influencers have, the less capable they will be of providing meaningful advice and recommendations about it. This line of thinking is supported by a 1996 Navy research study, which found the presence of veterans under age 65 in a county to be the

most important factor in explaining enlistment rates^v. A look at trends in the general population tells a dramatic story about the diminishing veteran population. There are now only one third as many veterans per capita as in 1980^{vi}. This is a factor that may make military recruiting increasingly challenging.

Total Veteran Population



This lack of familiarity with the military may be contributing to an avoidance of the topic. Although almost all parents on the November 2004 Influencer Poll reported talking with their children about their *future* either frequently or very frequently, only

42% reported that these discussions included the possibility of enlisting in the military. This means that over half of these parents have *never* discussed the possibility of enlisting in the military with their children.

Summary

Influencers are an important group to understand for those interested in youth decision-making. Their decisions about what to do after high school are affected by both parent and non-parent influencers, such as teachers, friends, and relatives. Although parents are the most important type of influencer, other influencers touch a greater number of youth and therefore must also be considered important.

The November 2004 Influencer Poll revealed that when considering what a youth should do after high school, influencers predominantly recommend further education and very infrequently recommend military service. When given a list of potential post-high school options and asked specifically about each one, influencers still almost universally recommend further education, but stated that they would likely recommend vocational training and full- and part-time work as well. These responses were similar to what was found on the May 2004 Influencer Poll for all post-high school options, except the military. There has been a significant decrease since the May 2004 Influencer Poll in the number of influencers who would recommend military service (from 39% to 35%).

Another factor that has influenced the recommendations of both parents and non-

parents is the economy. Perceptions of difficulty of finding a full-time job for high school graduates contributes to influencers' post-high school recommendations: Nearly 30% of influencers felt it is very difficult, or almost impossible, for a high school graduate to get a full-time job in their community. This may be one reason why they push future education. In addition, although the number has gone down slightly from May 2004, almost half of influencers feel the economy will be better in four years as opposed to about the same or worse. This could also be influencing post-high school recommendations.

Lastly, fewer influencers know what it is like to serve in the Military, while a large percentage can speak knowledgeably about working and going to college. The influencer population is becoming less familiar with the Military post-high school option as the population of U.S. Military veterans declines and will continue to decline. Past polls have shown that those most likely to support or recommend military service are family members who have themselves served in the U.S. Military. This decrease in the veteran population is sure to negatively influence propensity of youth to join the Military.

ⁱ Legree, P. J., Gade, P. A., Martin, D. E., Fischl, M. A., Wilson, M. J., Nieva, V. F., McCloy, R., & Laurence, J. (2000). Military enlistment and family dynamics: Youth and parental perspectives. *Military Psychology*, 12, 31-49.

ⁱⁱ The Condition of Education, 2001.

ⁱⁱⁱ Griepentrog, B. (2005) Parental Influence on Youth Propensity: A Re-examination of the May 2004 Youth and Influencer Polls. JAMRS Executive Note, www.dmren.org.

^{iv} Marsh, K. A., Emanuel, S., Bader, P., Marsh, S. & Boehmer, M. (2004) Building stronger alliances between the military and high school educators: From the educators' perspective. JAMRS Report No. 2004-004, Department of Defense.

^v Schmitz, E. J., & Boyer, A. (1996). *Socio-Demographics and Military Recruiting -- The Role of Veterans*. Arlington, VA: United States Navy Recruiting.

^{vi} www.va.gov.

OVERVIEW REPORT

The focus of Section Three is on influencers' attitudes about the Military, including where they get their impressions about the Military.



Section 3

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Attitudes Toward and Communication Strategies Regarding the Military

The previous section established an important link between influencers and propensity. We described the role that influencers play in youth decision-making and influencers' views on youth's post-high school options.

This section of the report will focus on influencers' attitudes and recommendations regarding enlistment and military service. Specifically, this section will cover in detail influencers' likelihood to recommend the military, their reactions to communication efforts regarding military service, and their attitudes toward the military and military recruiters (including their favorability toward and knowledge of the military).

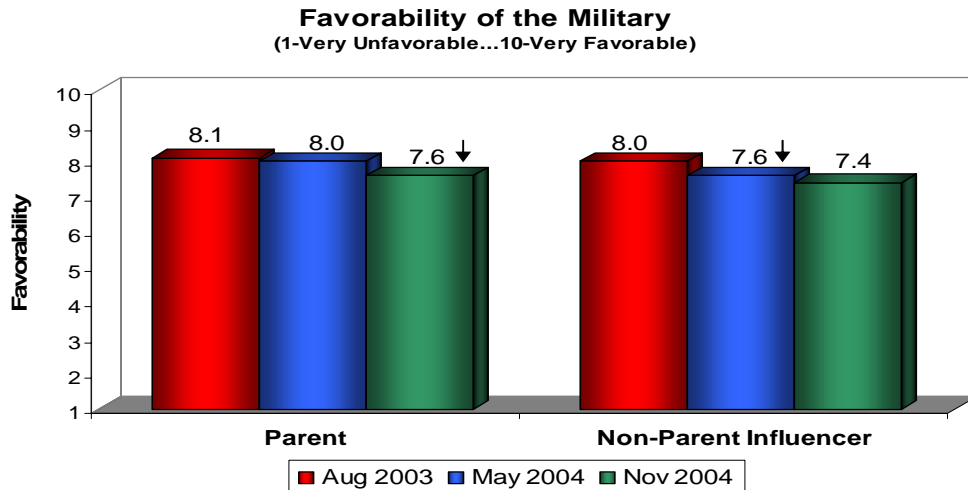
As the dynamic nature of current events continues to evolve, so does its impact on influencers' perceptions. Moreover, this impact differentially affects various types of influencers. As such, this section also examines reactions to current events and how these events shape influencers' attitudes and recommendations.

In addition, this section also discusses the sources of influencers' impressions about the military. Influencers' impressions and attitudes directly influence youth decision-making about enlistment in the U.S. Military. As such, understanding the source of these impressions is critical to explaining shifts in influencer attitudes and to developing media outreach campaigns.

Favorability

As would be expected, how positively influencers view the Military directly relates to how likely they are to recommend it. To understand the general trend of influencers' attitudes toward the Military, the Influencer

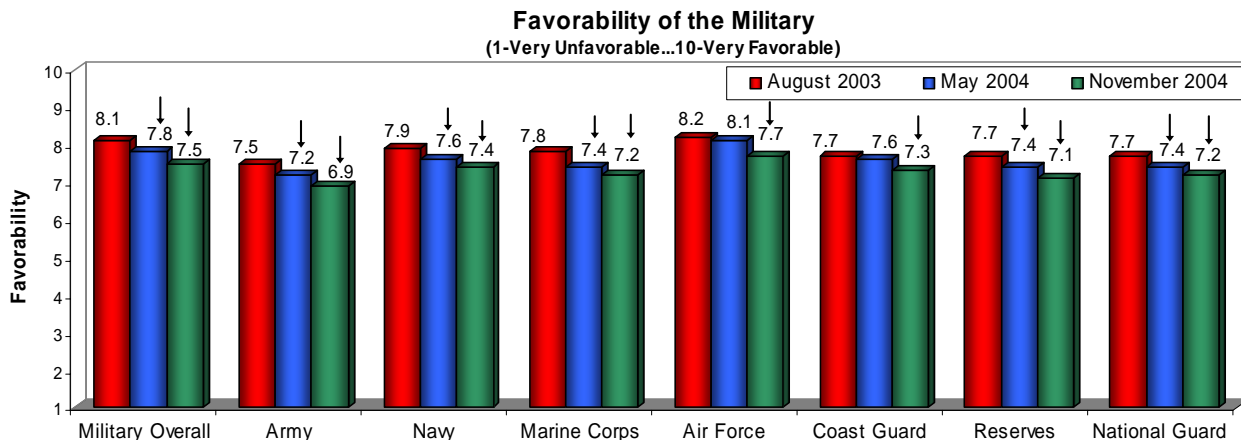
Poll includes a measure of favorability toward the military. This question asks influencers to rate their overall military favorability on a 10-point scale with 10 being the most favorable.



Overall, the results show that influencers are moderately favorable toward the Military, with parents being only slightly more favorable than non-parent influencers. This finding is consistent with the results obtained in the May 2004 Influencer Poll. However, parents' favorability dropped significantly. Interestingly, there has been a significant decrease in favorability for parents since May 2004, with the greatest

difference occurring among Black mothers. Black mothers' favorability has dropped significantly, from 7.1 to 6.1.

Likewise, parents are only moderately favorable toward each of the individual Services and components. Ratings for the U.S. Military overall and each of the individual Services and components have all significantly decreased since May 2004.



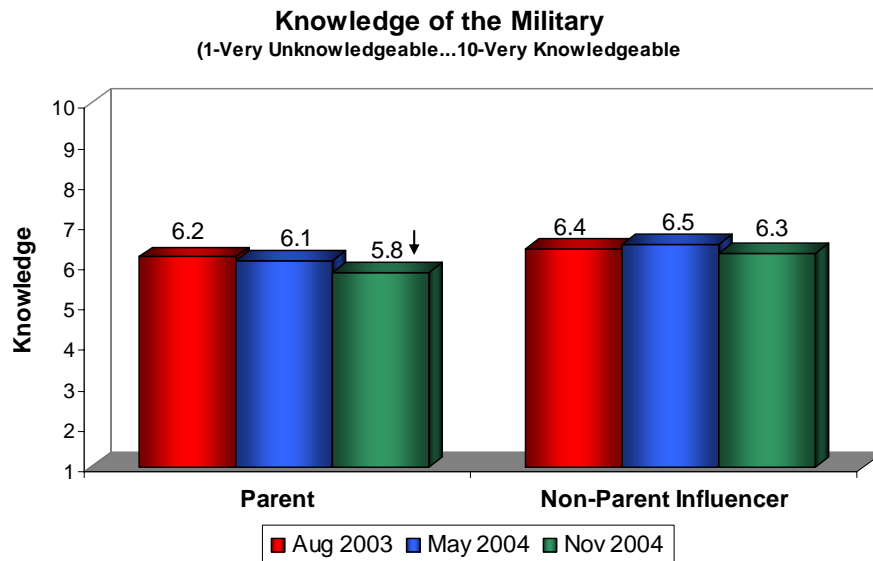
Knowledge

In addition to favorability toward the military, another measure used to track general attitudes and impressions is perceived knowledge. Past research studies have found that this measure is a good indicator of influencers' familiarity and comfort with the Military, more so than an indicator of actual declarative knowledgeⁱ. Further, past polls have also found that this measure is moderately related to an influencer's likelihood of recommending the Military to a young person.

Influencers rated their knowledge of the military on a 10-point scale with anchors ranging from 1 – not at all knowledgeable to 10 – extremely knowledgeable. Overall, results indicate that influencers feel they are only moderately knowledgeable about the Military, as evidenced by a mean rating of 6.1. Interestingly, there was a slight (but not significant) decrease in reported levels of military knowledge from May 2004.

Consistent with results from May 2004, male influencers continue to report feeling more knowledgeable about the Military than female respondents. Further, non-parents report slightly higher levels of military knowledge than do parents. Parents' perceived knowledge has decreased significantly from six months ago.

Influencers' moderate level of perceived knowledge of the military is consistent with the fact that only approximately 60% of them reported having spoken to a military recruiter. This level of influencer contact with recruiters is consistent with that found in May 2004 (59%).



Current Events

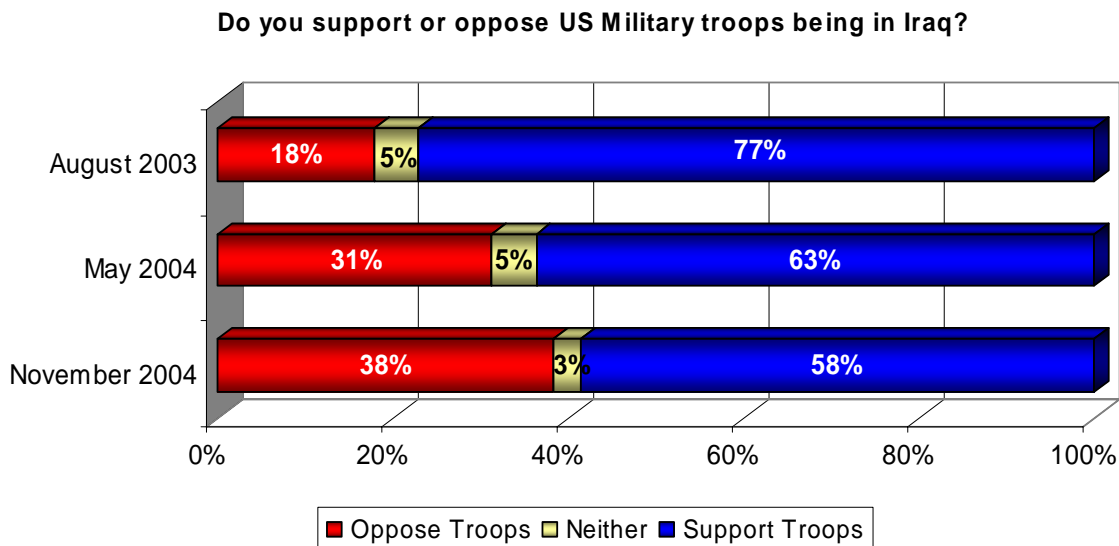
As touched on previously, perceptions of the current political and economic climate affect influencers' decisions about recommending military service. Influencers use these cues from their environment to weigh the potential benefits and risks of youth joining the military. This process greatly affects whether the influencer will recommend the military as an option.

In previous Youth and Influencer Polls, individuals reported specific examples of political and economic factors that drive their decisions to recommend or enlist. The 2004 Influencer Poll asked influencers a number of current events questions to determine what effects the War on Terrorism and the current Presidential Administration's handling of international conflicts has had on their likelihood to recommend the Military. Consistent with past surveys, analyses showed that all these factors were significantly correlated with influencers' likelihood to recommend military service.

Troops in Iraq

The majority of influencers continue to support troops being in Iraq (58%), but support dropped from May 2004, when it stood at 63%. Non-parent influencers remained significantly more likely than parents to oppose U.S. military troops being in Iraq (41% and 34%, respectively). Of those influencers who support troops being in Iraq, 44% said they are likely or very likely to recommend joining the Military. Meanwhile, of those influencers who do not support troops being in Iraq (38%), only 22% still say they are likely or very likely to recommend joining the Military.

22% Proportion of Black influencers who support troops being in Iraq – down from 36% in the May 2004 Influencer Poll.



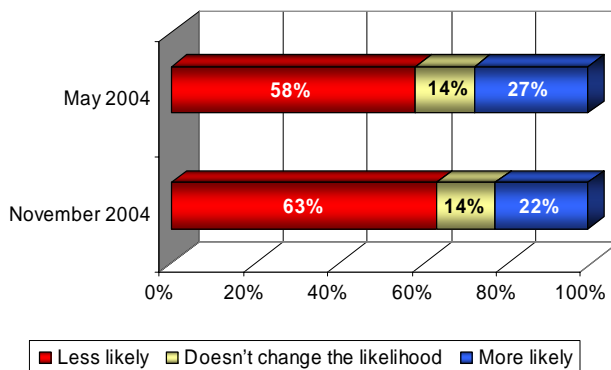
Current Events

(continued)

War on Terrorism

The War on Terrorism continues to have a negative impact on the majority of influencers. Overall, 63% of influencers report the war has reduced their likelihood to recommend military service. By influencer type, 71% of parents say they are less likely to recommend the military, significantly up from 63% in May 2004, and 57% of non-parents report being less likely to recommend military service. The negativity of parents' response to the War on Terrorism is a particular cause for concern, as a large majority of youth report that their parents have the greatest influence on their career decision-making. In addition, nearly all Black influencers (81%) reported that the War on Terrorism made them less likely to recommend the Military.

Does the situation related to the War on Terrorism make you more or less likely to recommend the military?

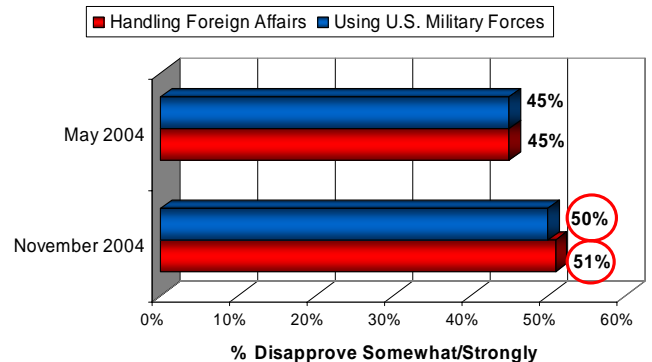


Bush Administration

Attitudes about the Bush Administration were fairly consistent with past polls. Overall, influencers are polarized in their views regarding the Bush Administration's use of U.S. Military Forces and handling of foreign affairs. About half of influencers report that they somewhat or strongly approve, while the other half reported that they somewhat or strongly disapprove. However, the proportion of influencers

strongly disapproving (now 37% and 36% respectively) increased since May 2004 (when it was 28% for both).

Percent disapproving of the way the Bush administration is...



Results for these items follow the pattern observed for influencers' support of troops being in Iraq. By influencer group, non-parents were significantly more likely than parents to strongly disapprove of the use of U.S. Military Forces and the handling of foreign affairs, as about 40% of non-parents and 32% of parents strongly disapprove of the way the Bush Administration is using U.S. Military forces and handling foreign affairs.

Groups most disapproving of the Bush Administration handling of foreign affairs and use of U.S. Military Forces are women and Blacks. Sixty-three percent of Blacks said they strongly disapproved of the handling of foreign affairs, and 68% strongly disapproved of the way U.S. Military Forces are being used. In contrast, 37% of Hispanics and 31% of Whites reported strongly disapproving of the handling of foreign affairs, and 31% of Whites and 34% of Hispanics strongly disapprove of how U.S. Military Forces are being used.

Communication Strategy and Recruiters

Communication Strategy

Another factor that is critical to understanding influencers' likelihood of recommending the Military are the communication strategies used to reach them. Specifically, this poll asked influencers about two communication strategies: contact by phone and contact by mail.

To examine the effectiveness of these communication strategies, we turned to signaling theory, a framework that classifies different types of communication strategies, or "signals", that are persuasive. According to signaling theory, there are costs (e.g., time, money) associated with creating new communication strategies. Different communication strategies can be evaluated to help identify those that provide maximum return and minimal cost. For example, the costs associated with phone versus mail vary greatly. A phone call allows for direct contact, but significant resources are required to reach a small number of influencers. By comparison, mail is a more economical way to reach a large number of influencers; however, contact is less personalized.

This poll assessed parent and educator receptiveness to these communication strategies by asking how likely they would be to speak with a recruiter who called them, and how likely they would be to read military materials received via mail.

Only about half of educators and coaches report they would let a recruiter speak with their students/players if they were to call, while 65% of parents would let their child speak with recruiters if they called the home.

RESPONSE TO RECRUITER CALL % Likely (4-5)	Educators (n=165)	Coaches (n=20)	Parents (n=675)
Ask the military recruiter questions of your own	64%	75%	62%
Let recruiter speak with the student/ player/child	48%	45%	65%
Have a conversation with youth about the military	45%	65%	69%

In contrast, almost 70% of educators and coaches would make information available to students/players if they received it in the mail, while 79% of parents would give the information to their children if they received mail at home.

RESPONSE TO MAIL % Likely (4-5)	Educators (n=165)	Coaches (n=20*)	Parents (n=675)
Make the information available to youth who might be interested	67%	70%	79%
Read the information	58%	75%	59%
Have a conversation with youth about the military	50%	55%	69%
Submit request to sender asking them to stop sending information	22%	35%	18%
Throw the information away without looking at it	18%	10%	15%

An interesting finding from Youth Poll 8 was that a phone call was slightly more likely than a piece of mail to motivate youth to have a discussion with their parents about the Military. However, this Influencer Poll suggests that influencers are equally likely to have a discussion with youth about the military after receiving either mail or a phone call. However, results indicate that mail may be a better outreach method, particularly in areas where attitudes regarding the military and recruiters are negative.

Communication Strategy and Recruiters

(continued)

Recruiters

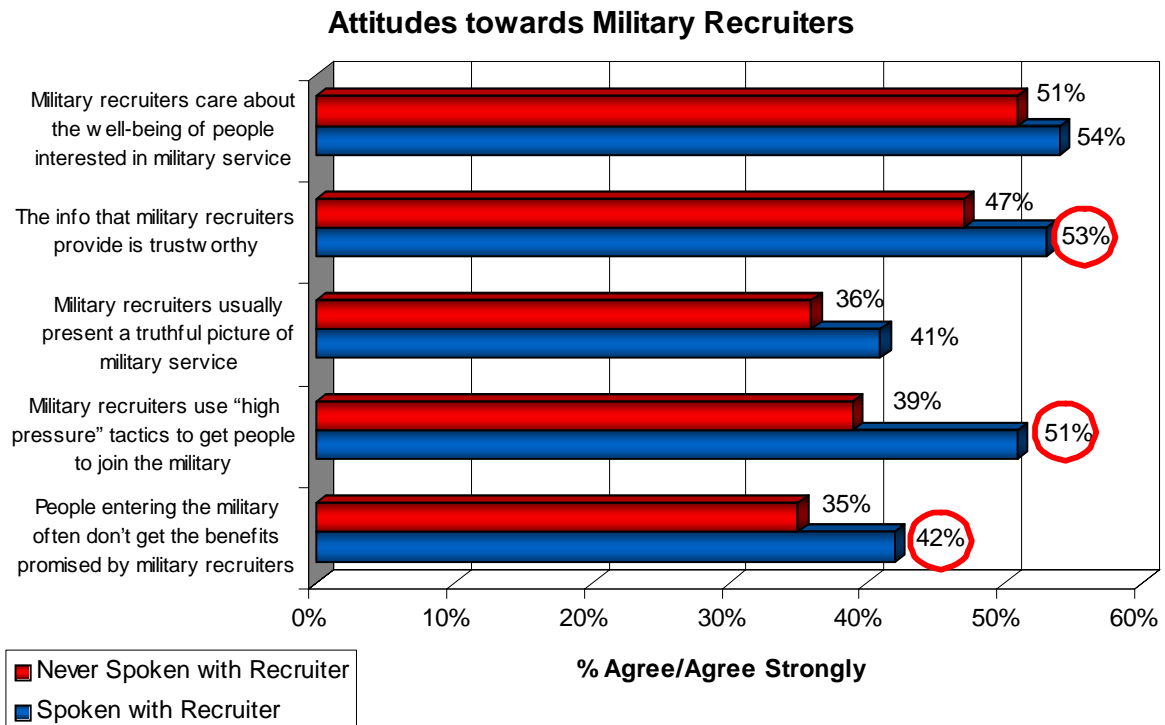
Interactions with and perceptions of recruiters also have an affect on influencers' likelihood to recommend the Military to youth. According to signaling theory, influencers interpret a wide variety of recruitment experiences (recruiter competence, trust in recruiters, and recruitment delays) as symbolic of broader organizational characteristics. As pointed out in Youth Poll 8, studying these impressions is important because, though some trust in recruiters exists, it has been steadily declining since 2002.

Influencers were asked several questions regarding their interaction with recruiters. Questions asked concerned the recruiters themselves as well as the recruitment techniques they used. Overall, 66% of non-parent influencers and 53% of parents

surveyed said they had spoken to a military recruiter.

Almost half of influencers, overall, believe military recruiters use high pressure sales tactics, and almost 4 in 10 believe that people entering the military do not get the benefits promised. It is particularly troubling to note that influencers who have spoken with a recruiter are more likely to agree with these two statements.

Thus, influencer attitudes regarding military recruiters are only moderately positive. Overall, parents have poorer attitudes toward the Military than non-parents, as parents are significantly less likely to agree that recruiters present a truthful picture (36% vs. 42%), are trustworthy (48% vs. 53%), and care about the well-being of potential recruits (48% vs. 56%).



Sources of Impressions

The November 2004 Influencer Poll also sought to uncover which factors contribute to influencers' impressions of the military. Therefore, influencers were asked to identify sources of their military impressions from a list that included friends, family, and media. They were then asked to assess the trust that they have in each of these sources.

Specifically, influencers were asked on a scale from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (very likely) “How likely would you be to use “source” if you were looking for information regarding the Military?” The results indicate that as a source, people are the most used source, followed by the Internet, media, and mail. The following table lists the sources that influencers find most trustworthy.

	Sources of Impressions <i>Percentage of influencers that would use these sources if they were looking for information about the military (% rated 4 or 5)</i>		Trust In Sources <i>Percentage of influencers who said they trust the information they would receive from these sources in regard to the military (% rated 4 or 5)</i>	
	Parents	Non-Parent Influencers	Parents	Non-Parent Influencers
Family Members	63%	72%	78%	81%
Military Websites	57%	64%	53%	57%
Internet	53%	63%	41%	44%
Friends	54%	62%	64%	64%
Educators	45%	54%	52%	60%
Recruiters	48%	48%	45%	42%
Newspaper Articles	25%	34%	21%	29%
Non-Fiction Books	18%	29%	25%	28%
Military Ads	25%	29%	24%	26%
Mail	47%	28%	34%	19%
Magazine Articles	22%	25%	21%	19%
TV News	27%	24%	22%	18%
TV Commercials	11%	20%	9%	15%
Radio Programs	11%	19%	13%	15%
Newspaper Ads	17%	18%	18%	15%
Magazine Ads	12%	16%	10%	16%
Radio Commercials	15%	15%	17%	14%
TV Entertainment	7%	13%	6%	8%
Movies	7%	11%	5%	6%
Fiction Books	10%	7%	7%	6%

People

Results show that the majority of influencers were likely to use other people (family, friends, educators, and recruiters) in their lives to form their impressions of

the Military. The majority of influencers also felt that they could trust information other people provide. Other sources of information received much lower trust ratings (see table above).

Sources of Impressions

(continued)

Internet

Military personnel have worked hard to provide interesting and truthful information about the Military to influencers via the Web. This is especially important given that the Internet was reported to be the second most frequently used source when looking for information on the Military. The percentage of influencers who report that they trust military Websites is higher than the Internet rating overall (55% vs. 42%).

61%

Proportion of influencers who reported they would go to military websites if seeking information about the Military

TV/Radio/Print

Although media sources fall below people and the Internet in terms of likelihood to use and trust, a significant proportion of parents and non-parent influencers report that they would use these media sources to gather information about the Military. It is important to remember, however, that these forms of communication take place regardless of whether they are being actively

sought. Future polls will address this issue to some extent (see “Coming Soon” note below).

Mail

Overall, only 36% of influencers said they were likely to use mail to gather information regarding the military. An even lower percentage of influencers (26%) reported trusting the information they receive in mail about the Military.

Entertainment

The November 2004 Influencer Poll also asked influencers about information they obtain through entertainment (movies, fiction, and TV entertainment programs). Very few influencers report that they would use entertainment sources to obtain information about the Military. This may be due to the fact that most influencers do not trust this information, as only 8% of parents or non-parent influencers rated these sources as trustworthy. Once again it is important to remember that these types of information sources do not have to be actively sought out to have an impact.

COMING SOON

The May 2005 Youth and Influencer Polls also investigate sources of impressions, but they look more deeply at where exactly people get their information. In particular, these polls will have specific information on which movies and TV shows they are watching as well as what type of impressions they received from the source.

Summary

In summary, Section 3 focused on influencers' attitudes and impressions of the military by examining their views of the military and their attitudes toward current events. This section also specifically examined influencers' sources of impressions by asking them where they get their information about the Military and how much trust they have in each source.

Favorability

Currently, influencers still have favorable attitudes toward the Military. However, military favorability decreased significantly for parents relative to six months before. Still, the majority of influencers rated the Military favorably.

Knowledge

Overall, influencers feel only moderately knowledgeable about the Military, as evidenced by a mean rating of 6.1 on a 10-point scale. This level of perceived knowledge has remained relatively consistent.

Current Events

Current events play a large role in influencers' likelihood to recommend the Military. Influencers who are likely to

recommend the Military are also more likely to: support U.S. Military troops being in Iraq; feel the U.S. was justified in its decision to go to war with Iraq; and approve of the Bush Administration's handling of foreign affairs/use of U.S. Military Forces.

Unfortunately, perceptions regarding current events are becoming increasingly negative. The proportion of parents and non-parent influencers who report the War on Terrorism has negatively affected their likelihood to recommend the military significantly increased from May 2004 levels.

Communication Strategy

When it comes to contacting influencers, both mail and phone seem to be fairly effective. More than half of influencers said that they would let youth talk to a recruiter or read mail that came from the Military. Attitudes toward recruiters involving trust affect how likely influencers are to act as roadblocks and to prevent the recruiter from speaking with or mail from getting to youth. To increase "reach" for recruiters, particularly in schools, attitudes regarding trust in recruiters need improvement.

Summary

(continued)

Recruiters

Many influencers currently have some distinctly negative attitudes toward Military recruiters. However, recruiters are still seen as a valuable source of information about the Military.

Maintaining and improving current levels of trust is very important. If this trust slips any lower, recruiting is likely to become impossible, as there are few other sources of accurate information currently available (veteran groups, family members, educators, etc.) that can provide detailed and honest information regarding the true tangible and intangible benefits the Military offers. Further, a loss of trust may not only lead to youth not being interested in speaking with recruiters, but influencers may also become increasingly likely to see it as their responsibility to block recruiter contact with the youth they influence.

Sources of Impressions

Influencers are most likely to utilize and trust the following sources when looking for information about the Military: family members and friends; military Websites and Internet; teachers, guidance counselors and coaches; and military recruiters. Not surprisingly, the sources that influencers are most likely to use are also the ones they trust the most.

Recommendations

This section of the report focused on the November 2004 Influencer Poll 4's findings regarding influencers' attitudes toward the military and their likelihood to recommend the Military. These findings highlight the importance of influencers' attitudes toward and perceptions of the military in their decisions to recommend enlistment and military service. Attitudes toward the military have shown a negative shift in the past year, as favorability toward the military has fallen and attitudes toward recommending the military have become less positive.

Furthermore, influencers' likelihood to recommend military service has declined significantly since the previous Influencer Poll in May 2004. The War on Terrorism and the situation in Iraq appear to have significantly lowered influencers' likelihood to recommend the military, and recent changes suggest this impact is both negative and potentially large. Black influencers, in particular, reported negative views of these events. It will be important to monitor these attitudes and their impact on recommending behavior, as shifts in such behavior, particularly among parents, could be expected to precipitate problems recruiting youth.

ⁱ Wiggins, B., Marsh, S. & Marsh, K. (2005). Knowledge Study: Influencer Final Report. JAMRS Report.

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OVERVIEW REPORT

Section Four presents information on influencers' favorability toward and likelihood to recommend each of the branches and their components. This section also presents trends and demographics for each Service.



Section 4

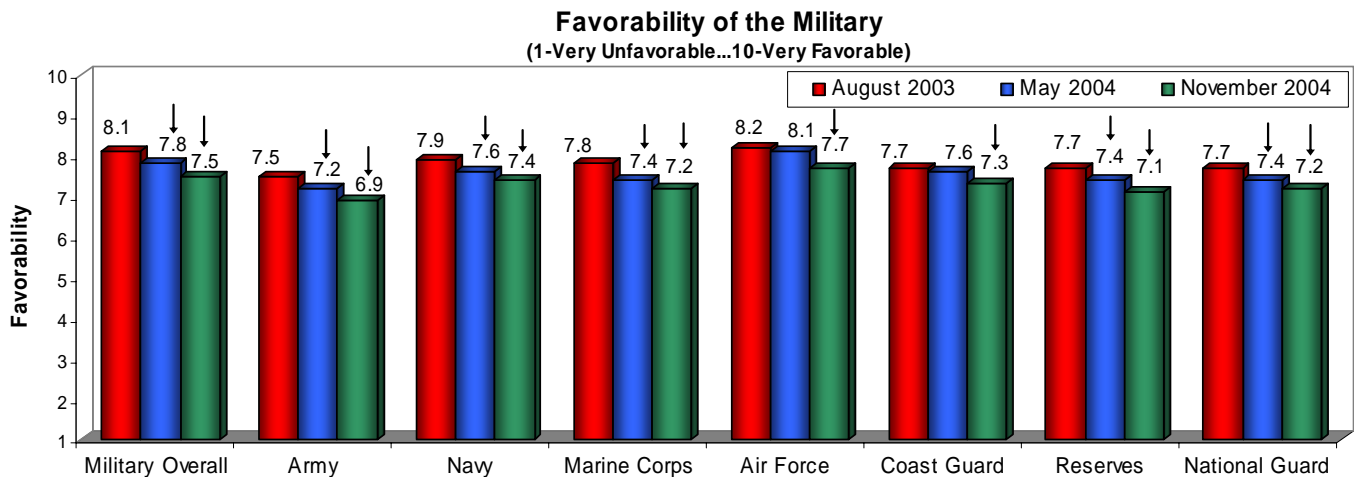
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Introduction

The last section presented information on influencers' attitudes toward the military, knowledge about the military, and likelihood to recommend military service to youth. This section breaks down these findings further and presents information on influencers' favorability toward and likelihood to recommend each of the military Active Duty Service branches as well as the National Guard and Reserves. As in the previous section, this section presents historical trends as well as detailed breakouts for key demographics, such as gender, age, and influencer type.

The chart below shows the poll-to-poll changes in favorability ratings for each of the Active Duty Services, National Guard and Reserves. Favorability ratings for all of the military Services and components have significantly dropped from 6 months ago.

Further, Black influencers continue to be less favorable toward the military than non-Blacks; influencers with a graduate school education are less favorable than those without one; and influencers ages 22-35 are less favorable than influencers 36-49 or 50 and older.



Likelihood to Recommend: U.S. Military

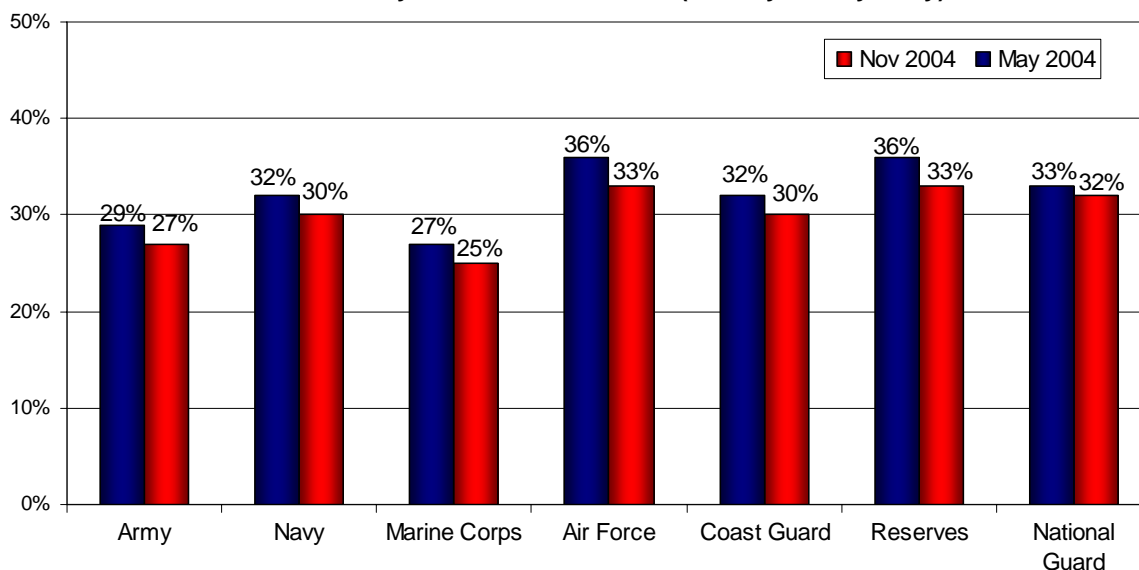
Likelihood to recommend military service is tracked across waves of the Influencer Polls. Influencers are asked about their likelihood to recommend the military overall, each of the Active Duty Services, and the Reserves and National Guard. Each respondent reports their likelihood to recommend as “very likely,” “likely,” “neither likely nor unlikely,” “unlikely,” or “very unlikely.” Those who respond that they are “very likely” or “likely” are categorized as likely to recommend that Service.

The chart below shows the poll-to-poll changes. In comparison with the May 2004 Influencer Poll, influencers’ likelihood to

recommend was numerically lower for every Active Duty branch as well as for the Reserves and National Guard. However, none of these drops was statistically significant.

Across all branches and components, men were more likely to recommend than women. For the Active Duty branches influencers who reported a household income of \$25,000 to \$40,000 were more likely to recommend than influencers in other income categories. For the Reserves and National Guard, influencers with an income of less than \$25,000 were most likely to recommend.

**Suppose a youth you know came to you for advice about post-high school options.
Likelihood you would recommend (% likely or very likely):**



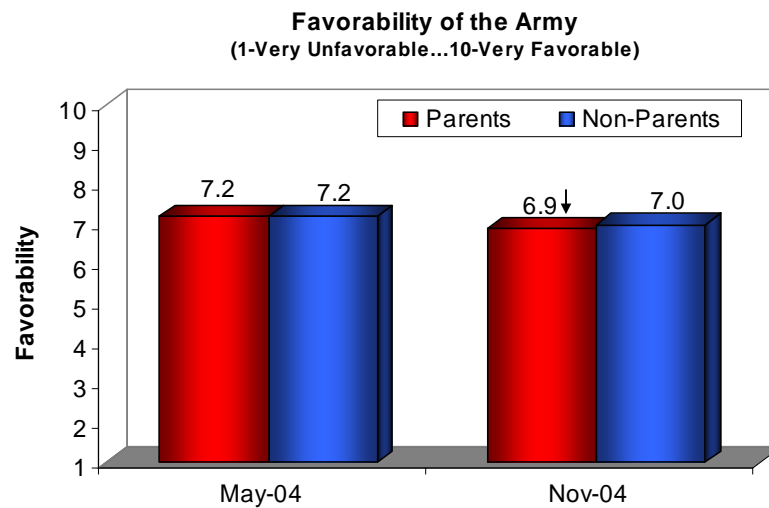
The remainder of this section presents more detailed information on the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, Reserves, and National Guard, including influencers’ likelihood to recommend and favorability toward each branch. Likelihood

to recommend for each Service or component is broken out by parental status, and meaningful differences between other demographic subgroups are discussed. Additionally, more detailed tables can be found in Appendix A of this report.

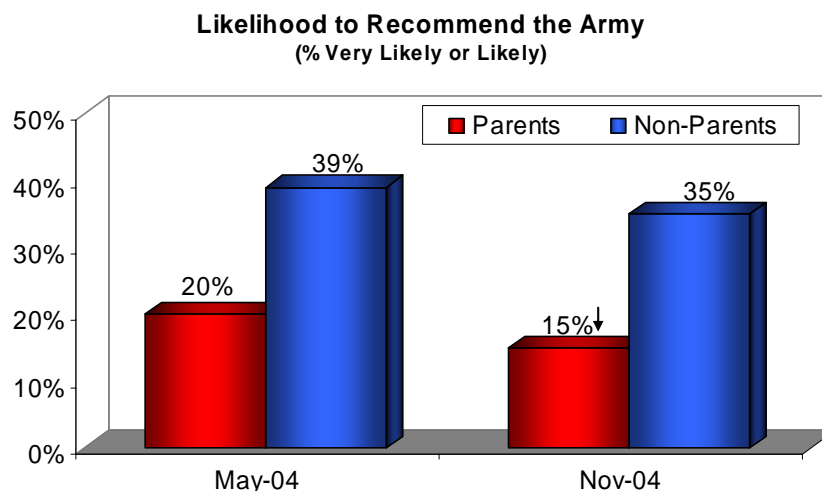
Likelihood to Recommend: Army

The U.S. Army requires the greatest number of recruits of the Services, and therefore must maintain the interest of a broad group to meet its recruiting goals. Influencers in this poll had a moderately positive view of the Army, as they did of the military in

general: They gave the Army a mean rating of 6.9 on a 10-point scale. This number is down significantly from May 2004 (from 7.2). Parents were significantly less favorable toward the Army than they were in May 2004.



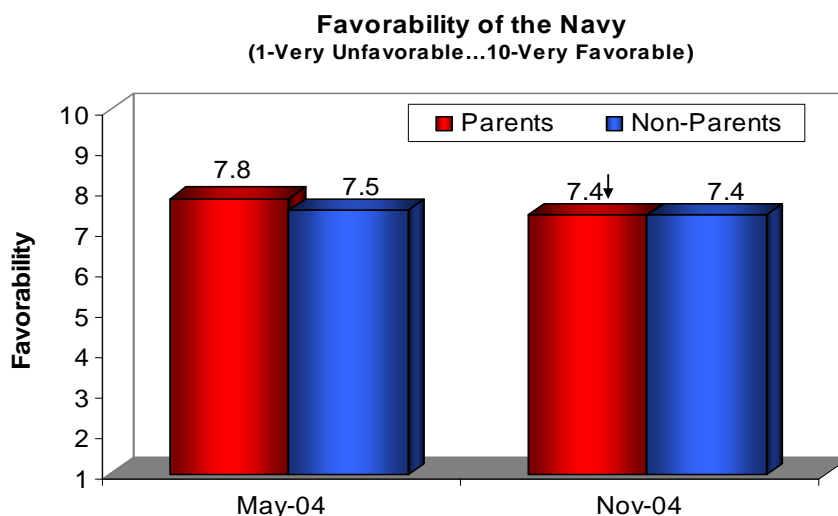
During the same period, both parents became significantly less likely to recommend the Army. Overall, likelihood to recommend the Army was significantly lower for those ages 36-49 than for older or younger influencers.



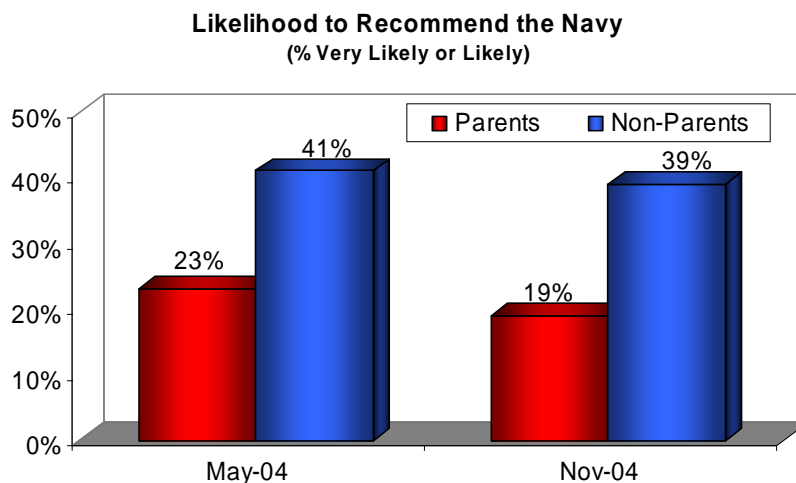
Likelihood to Recommend: Navy

Parents and non-parents had a moderately positive view of the Navy, as they both gave it a mean rating of 7.4 on a 10-point scale. Overall, favorability toward the Navy was lower than it was in May 2004. Although

favorability among parents decreased significantly, the decrease for non-parents was not statistically significant. Blacks rated the Navy significantly less favorably than did non-Blacks.



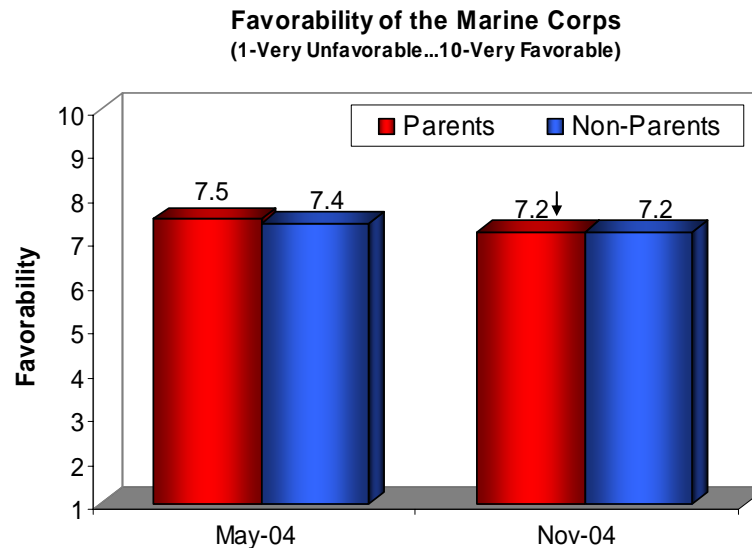
Likelihood to recommend the Navy has fallen since May 2004 for both parents and non-parents. However, neither of these declines is statistically significant. Overall, those ages 36-49 were less likely to recommend the Navy than were older or younger influencers.



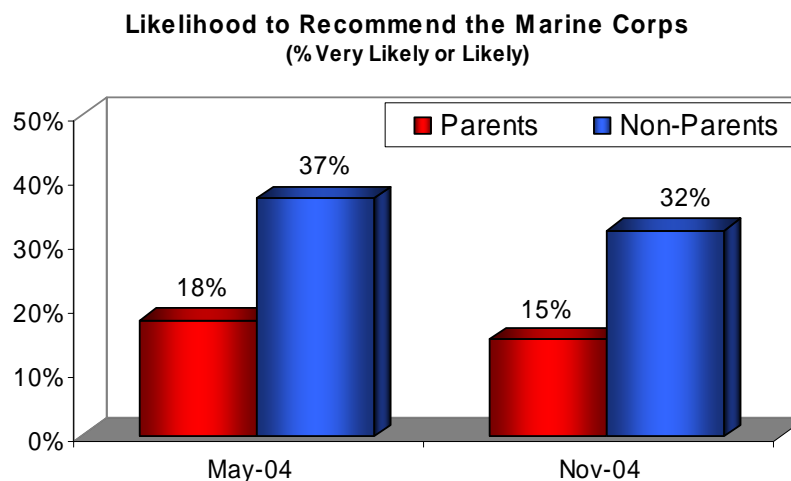
Likelihood to Recommend: Marine Corps

Influencers had a moderately positive view of the Marine Corps, as they gave it a mean rating of 7.2 on a 10-point scale. Parents

rated the Marine Corps significantly less favorably in this poll than they did in May 2004.



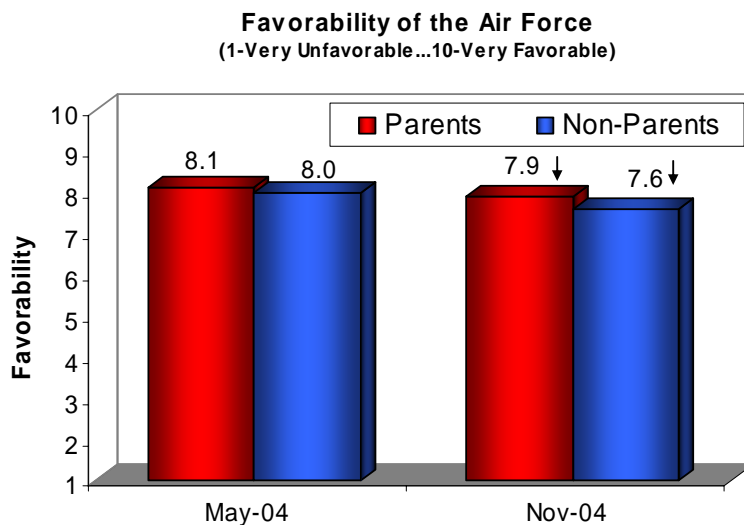
Influencers' likelihood of recommending the Marine Corps also fell since the previous Influencer Poll in May 2004. Again, these drops were not statistically significant. Those ages 36-49 were less likely to recommend the Marine Corps than were older or younger influencers.



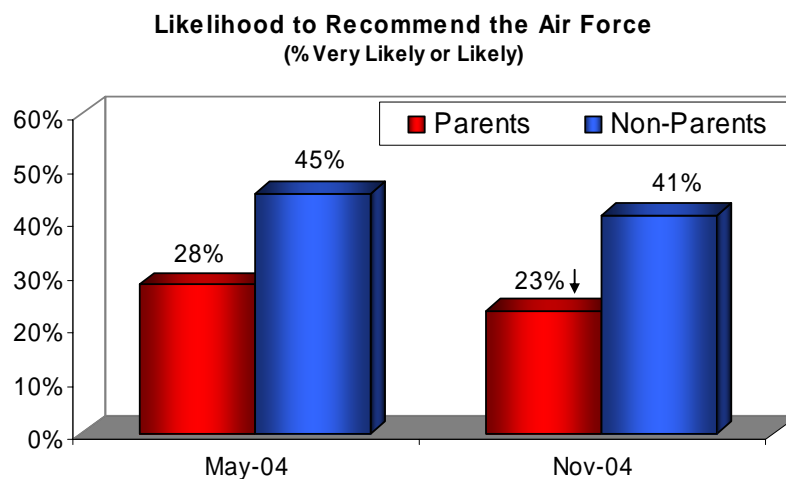
Likelihood to Recommend: Air Force

Of all the Active Duty Services, influencers have the most positive view of the Air Force, giving it a mean rating of 7.7 on a 10-point scale. Both parents' and non-parent influencers' favorability toward the Air

Force dropped since May 2004. Also, those who have a household income of \$25,000 or less are the least favorable toward the Air Force.



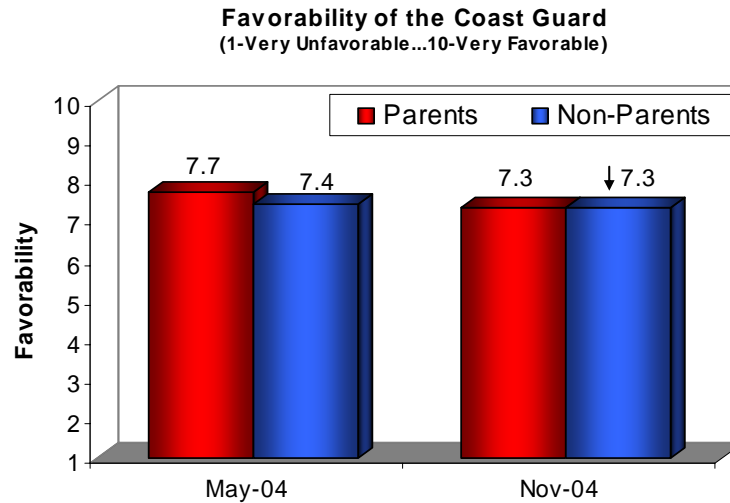
Parents' likelihood to recommend the Air Force dropped significantly from the last measure in May 2004. Parents whose highest level of education was "high school diploma or less" were most likely to recommend the Air Force. Overall, those ages 36-49 were less likely to recommend the Air Force than were either older or younger ones.



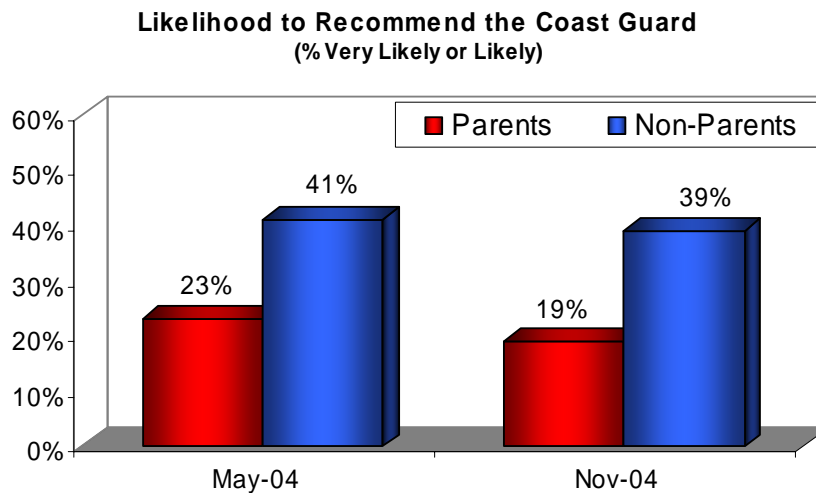
Likelihood to Recommend: Coast Guard

Influencers had a moderately positive view of the Coast Guard, giving it a mean rating of 7.3 on a 10-point scale. This number is down significantly from the rating in May

2004. Although favorability for both parents and non-parents went down, it has only decreased significantly for parents.



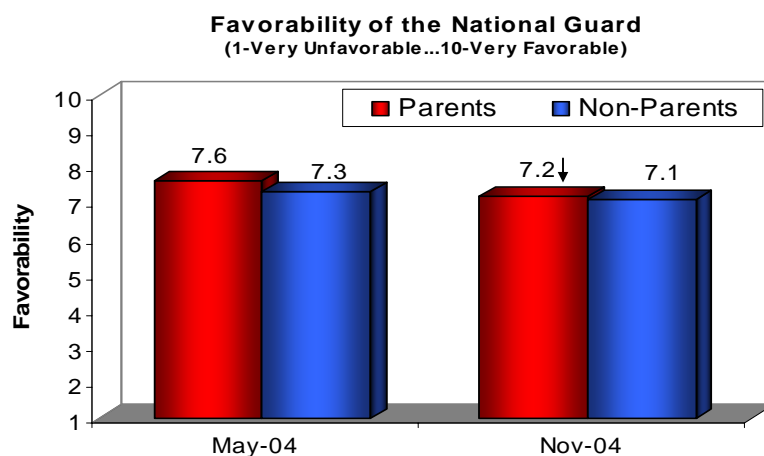
Likelihood to recommend the Coast Guard has fallen since the last measure in May 2004. However, this drop was not significant overall for either parents or non-parents.



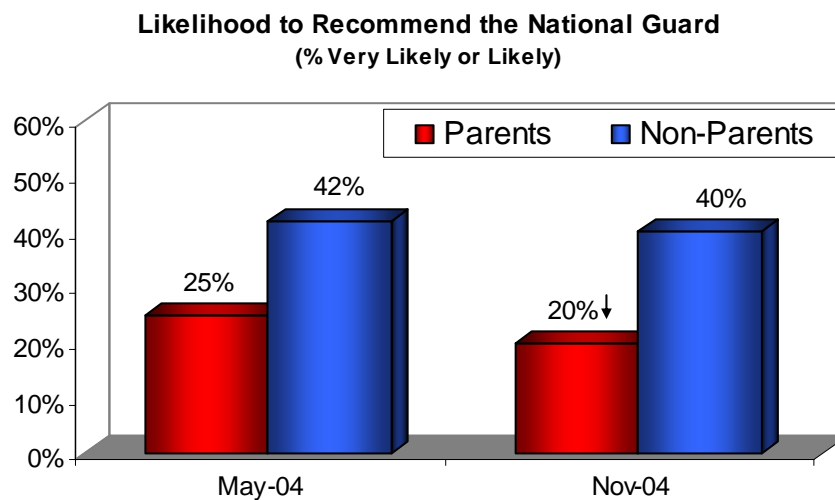
Likelihood to Recommend: National Guard

Influencers had a moderately positive view of the National Guard, giving it a mean rating of 7.2 on a 10-point scale. This rating was down significantly from that measured in May 2004 (7.4).

Parents' favorability was significantly lower than it was in May 2004. Women were more favorable toward the National Guard than were men.



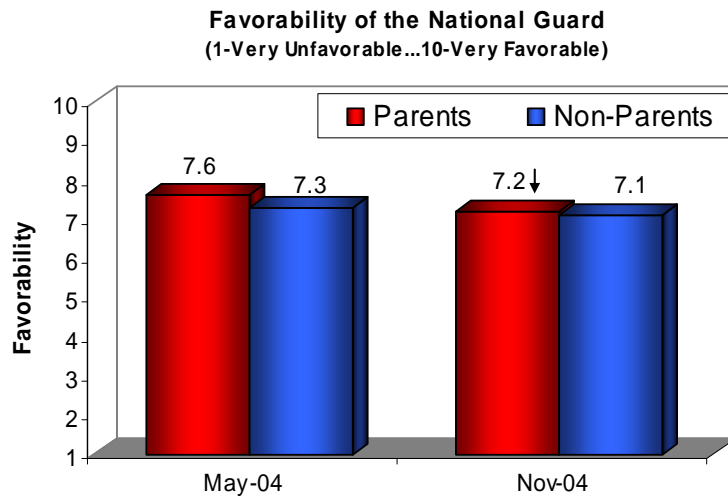
Overall, Influencers' likelihood to recommend the National Guard also dropped significantly since August 2003. This change was significant for parents but not for non-parents. Influencers ages 36-49 were less likely to recommend the National Guard than were older or younger ones. Also, influencers whose education was "high school diploma or less" were most likely to recommend the National Guard.



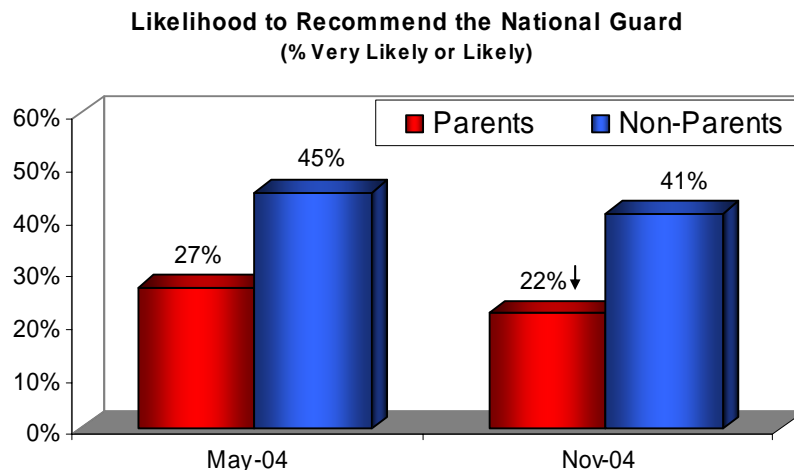
Likelihood to Recommend: Reserves

Overall, influencers had a moderately positive view of the Reserves, giving it a mean rating of 7.2 on a 10-point scale. This number was down significantly from that measured in May 2004. Parents reported decreased favorability for the Reserves, but

non-parents' favorability was not significantly different from that observed in May 2004. In addition, women were more favorable toward the Reserves than were men.



Parents' likelihood to recommend the Reserves dropped significantly since May 2004. As with many of the other Services, overall those ages 36-49 were less likely to recommend the Reserves than were older or younger influencers.



Summary

Results for the November 2004 Influencer Poll indicate that influencers' likelihood to recommend each of the Active Duty Services as well as for the National Guard and Reserves remained relatively steady since last measured in May 2004.

Although influencers were most favorable towards the Air Force, this Service saw the largest decrease in favorability from May 2004.

Section 4 also presented information about each of the Services' metrics, broken out by key demographic characteristics.

Overall, these findings indicate a few general trends:

- Favorability toward the U.S. Military, the individual Services, the Reserves and the National Guard declined from the May 2004 Influencer Poll to the November 2004 Influencer Poll.
- Men were more likely to recommend the Services than were women.
- Influencers with a graduate school education were less favorable toward the Military and Services than were those without.
- Blacks were less favorable toward the Military than were non-Blacks.
- Those ages 36-49 were the least likely to recommend the Services.
- Generally, those who reported an annual household income of \$25,000 to \$40,000 were more likely to recommend the Military and each of the branches than were all other income categories. However, those with a household income of \$25,000 or less were more likely to recommend the Reserves and National Guard than were the other income categories.

OVERVIEW REPORT

Section Five presents an overview of the findings from the November 2004 Influencer Poll. Information in this section includes a summary of chapters 1-4 as well as some final conclusions.



Section 5

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Summary and Conclusions

The November 2004 Influencer Poll was the third fielding of the DoD Influencer Polling effort. This poll continued to track intent to recommend the military among those who have relationships with youth ages 12-21. The poll also sought to identify the factors that influence their decision to make such recommendations. This effort was undertaken to assist the Military in enhancing the quantity and quality of the supply of propensed youth, and to assist it in converting them into enlistees.

Each Influencer Poll also measures influencers' favorability toward the military, perceived knowledge of the military, perceptions of current economic conditions, and reactions to current events. In addition, this Influencer Poll also focused on influencers' attitudes toward military recruiters, responses to DoD recruiting communications efforts, and influencers' sources of information about the military.

Adult Influencers and Recommendations to Youth

The ways in which adults influence youth's career decision-making differs depending on their role. Parents have a very significant impact on their children, whereas educators and other non-parent influencers typically have a less significant impact, but on a much

greater number of youth. One important change affecting the recommendations of influencers and decisions of youth is the decrease in the proportion of veterans in the general adult population. This decrease is likely to make the influencer population, in general, both less informed about and less likely to recommend military service.

According to poll results, influencers are most focused on education, and see work and the military almost as options of last resort. Overall, only 42% of non-parents and 25% of parents said it was likely that they would recommend the military to a youth they know/their students/their children. Influencers' likelihood to recommend the military fell about 5% for both groups since the May 2004 Influencer Poll.

Results suggest that likelihood to recommend varied by demographic segments:

- Gender: Men were more likely to recommend than were women.
- Income: Those with a household income of \$25,000 to \$40,000 were more likely to recommend than were those in all other income categories.

Summary and Conclusions

(continued)

Influencers' Attitudes Toward the Military

Influencers reported a positive view of the military, but admitted that they were not particularly knowledgeable about it. The mean favorability rating was 7.5, while the mean knowledge rating was 6.1 on scales from 1 (low) to 10 (high). Influencers' favorability was lower than their favorability level in May 2004. Self-reported knowledge about the military remained moderate for both parents and non-parent influencers.

Perceptions of military pay and difficulty in finding a full-time job may, however, currently be helping recruitment. Influencers reported positive impressions about military pay, as 67% felt that youth were at least as likely to find a job with good pay in the military as they were in the civilian sector. In addition, most (80%) of influencers reported it is at least somewhat difficult for a high school graduate to find a job in their community. Although a lot of influencers viewed finding a job today as difficult, 43% believed that the economy four years from now will be better than it is today. This number is down from 49% in August 2003.

Impact of Current Events

The U.S. War on Terrorism has had an enormous impact on influencers' likelihood to recommend the Military. Results from this poll indicate that this impact has been shifting increasingly to the negative. Results indicate that more than one in three (38% of) influencers now oppose U.S. troops' presence in Iraq, up from 31% in May 2004. In addition, the percentage of influencers who disapprove of the way the Bush Administration is handling foreign affairs and using U.S. Military forces passed 50%.

When asked about the U.S. War in Iraq, 63% of influencers reported that they were less likely to recommend the Military as a result. Notably, the groups that have been most negatively affected are parents and Blacks. Seventy-one percent of parents say the war has made them less likely to recommend the Military and the large majority of Blacks – 81% – reported the war has reduced their likelihood to recommend military service. These results highlight a serious problem unfolding for military recruiting.

Summary and Conclusions

(continued)

Conversations with Youth

The majority of influencers report talking to youth about their future. However, less than half of influencers report that the Military enters into these conversations. Those influencers who do discuss the Military with youth tend to report being positive about it, though parents are more prone to be negative than non-parent influencers. Results from the concurrently conducted Youth Poll indicate that youth who have spoken with an influencer about the Military are more propensed as well as more knowledgeable about and favorable toward the Military.

Military Recruiters

Overall, attitudes about recruiters are positive, but only moderately so. Parents' attitudes towards recruiters are worse than those of non-parent influencers, overall. Also, in general agreement with negative statements about recruiters is fairly high across influencers.

Over half of influencers report having spoken with a military recruiter. However, those same influencers were more likely to report that the information that military recruiters imparted was not trustworthy, that military recruiters use "high pressure" tactics, and that people entering the Military often don't get the benefits they were promised.

Sources of Information about the Military

The sources that influencers are most likely to use when seeking information about the Military are also the sources that they report trusting the most. In order of the likelihood

of influencers using them, these sources are: (1) family and friends, (2) military Websites and the Internet, (3) educators, and (4) military recruiters. Both parents and non-parent influencers report that they would be fairly receptive to both phone calls from recruiters and mail from the Military.

Moving Forward

These findings indicate that military recruiting may benefit from efforts to increase communication between influencers and youth regarding military service. Results also suggest that recruiter phone calls and mailing will increase influencer-youth communication. This is likely to promote increased enlistment propensity in youth and an increase in joining behaviors, but more research is required to determine the true nature of communications spurred by such efforts.

Overall, trust in and perceptions of recruiters must be improved to maximize the benefit of recruiter communications. If this trust slips any lower, the recruiting "job" will likely become impossible, as there are few other sources of information currently available (veteran groups, family members, educators, etc.) that can provide detailed and honest information regarding the true tangible and intangible benefits the military offers. Further, if trust continues to erode, youth might become less interested in speaking with recruiters and influencers may become more likely to see it as their "responsibility" to block recruiter contact with the youth they influence.

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